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Cultural development

Note by the Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on cultural development, which was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/184 of 15 December 1998.

* A/55/150.

** The draft report was received from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 24 August 2000.

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Report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on cultural development

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 53/184, having taken note of the note of the Secretary-General on the convening of the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (Stockholm, March-April 1998), the General Assembly invited all States, intergovernmental bodies and organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations to implement the recommendations of the Action Plan adopted by the Stockholm Conference, to cooperate with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the purpose of ensuring effective follow-up to the Action Plan, and to intensify their efforts to integrate cultural factors into their development programmes and projects. The resolution also encouraged UNESCO "to pursue its ongoing task of promoting throughout the United Nations system a greater awareness of the crucial relationship between culture and development, taking into account the diversity of cultures and the need to apply the recommendations of the Stockholm Conference". Finally, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Director-General of UNESCO, to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-fifth session a report on the implementation of the resolution.

2. The Stockholm Conference validated many years of advocacy on the part of UNESCO, undertaken with a view to bringing culture to the heart of the development agenda. It also provided international benchmarks for a renewal of relevant efforts and proposed new approaches to the complex and rapidly changing needs of our time. The Conference set the agenda for governmental frameworks and initiatives in the domain of culture for many years to come. It has already stimulated an increasingly broad recognition of culture as a key area of human activity and an essential ingredient of the development process: the backbone of identity, the highest expression of individual and collective creativity; an increasingly important motor of both economic growth and the energies and cohesion that all societies require.

II. Action taken by Member States and international organizations

3. Many Governments, organizations and institutions, both public and private, have responded to the rallying cry for culture contained in the Stockholm Action Plan. A case in point was the launching by Ms. Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage, of an informal network of ministers of culture, who met for the first time in Ottawa in June 1998 to discuss ways of sustaining local and national cultures in an increasingly globalized world and who agreed to launch an informal international network to promote those goals. The Government of Mexico hosted a second meeting of the informal network in September 1999, and a third will be organized by the Government of Greece in September 2000.

4. Other important developments have included the creation by the World Bank of a lending programme for cultural projects, the organization by the World Bank and the Government of Italy, in cooperation with UNESCO, of the "Culture Counts" Conference in Florence (4-7 October 1999) on the financing and economics of culture in sustainable development, and the establishment of a special culture and development page on the World Bank's Global Development Gateway (www.worldbank.org). The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) has also stepped up its efforts in the domain of culture. A special symposium on development and culture was organized with the cooperation of UNESCO and the Institut d'études politiques on the occasion of the 1998 annual meeting of IDB in March 1999.

5. UNESCO has encouraged these and many other activities, consistently stressing the need for concrete initiatives that mobilize political will and persuade Governments to promote public policies that recognize the central role of culture in development.

6. Member States in all regions contributed to the conceptualization of the new programme on cultural policies for development elaborated by the Director-General of UNESCO, as follow-up to the Stockholm Conference (see below), by indicating their priorities in reply to a questionnaire sent to them by the UNESCO secretariat in the summer of 1999 or by calling upon

the advisory services and technical expertise of UNESCO. Many Member States have begun to review their cultural policies in the light of the Stockholm Action Plan or to envisage a reformulation of their cultural policy frameworks. They have sought to address various challenges highlighted in the Action Plan, such as fostering domestic cultural industries, finding better ways of "living together" in a spirit of pluralism and intercultural dialogue, and promoting visions of cultural democracy in a world of ever-increasing interconnections. Some of the member States that have not yet defined formal cultural policies are now expressing their interest in doing so.

III. Action taken by UNESCO

7. In the spring of 1998, immediately after the Stockholm Conference, the UNESCO secretariat designed a new line of action on cultural policies for development. It was endorsed by the Organization's Executive Board in the autumn of 1998 and elaborated further in the draft programme and budget for 2000-2001 considered by the General Conference at its thirtieth session in the autumn of 1999. In a resolution adopted by the General Conference on that occasion, the Director-General is authorized to promote public policies that recognize the central role of culture in development, including the creation of income-generating activities, by mobilizing and sharing information and new knowledge, particularly knowledge concerning the trade in cultural goods, facilitating the elaboration of innovative policy frameworks and strengthening national and local capacities in the management/administration of cultural institutions; and to develop further inter-agency cooperation with a view to establishing close links between cultural and educational, social, health and development policies.

8. This mandate is now being implemented in a threefold manner, through:

(a) The monitoring, collection and dissemination of policy-relevant knowledge and information;

(b) The promotion of capacity-building in member States;

(c) The reinforcement of advocacy and reflections on cultural policies in the context of development.

In order to formulate the mandate, the secretariat consulted widely with Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and foundations, as well as with individual experts and activists in the cultural policy field. The aim was to develop a programme that could be nourished by and affect all of UNESCO's cultural activities, just as the Stockholm Conference had recommended. The preparatory consultation helped to map cross-cultural diversity with regard to policy stances and actions. The consultation process included the commissioning of analytical studies on approaches to key issues in different regions. The secretariat also carefully examined the Council of Europe's cultural policy review programme, with a view to learning from the valuable lessons of that experience and adapting them to expressed needs in other geo-cultural settings.

9. Activities to disseminate the messages of the Stockholm Conference accompanied the elaboration of the new programme. Some 10,000 copies of the *Final Report* of the Conference were distributed widely in all the working languages of the General Conference. A special effort was made to provide UNESCO field offices with copies of the Action Plan as well as the *Final Report*, both in electronic format and in paper form, in the hope that they might be able to stimulate the establishment of national working groups and other initiatives designed to make practical use of the outcomes of the Conference. A section on the Conference and the follow-up to it, including an interactive component, was added to the UNESCO Culture web site. It includes such new features as a bimonthly editorial on culture and development issues.

10. In addition to the specific set of activities on cultural policies outlined above, the Executive Board of UNESCO, at its session in 1998, requested the Director-General to envision in a trans-disciplinary way a comprehensive range of activities to advance international cooperation on culture and development. Measures to follow up on that request include the research and analysis being carried out in the framework of *World Culture Report* and programming in the domains of artistic creativity and cultural heritage, copyright, the cultural industries and cultural pluralism. A particular case in point was the organization in June 1999, with the support and cooperation of Canadian Heritage and the French National Commission for UNESCO, of a symposium, entitled "Culture: A Form of Merchandise Like no

Other". The symposium brought together artists, independent professionals, jurists, economists and other experts from the private and public culture and broadcasting sectors from all regions. The discussions focused on the economic and commercial stakes of the cultural sector, as stressed at Stockholm, and indicated ways in which UNESCO could promote an international debate on the appropriate strategies required in international negotiations, and on the contents and procedures of governmental action and a sector-specific debate on the situation of the cultural industries in different regions.

11. Concurrently, the broader goal of reshaping UNESCO's entire programme in the light of the Stockholm Conference was pursued in 1998-1999 through the work of the Intersectoral Committee on Cultural Policies for Development, chaired by Mr. Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, and an informal intersectoral Task Force on Cultural Policies for Development, chaired by the Assistant Director-General for Culture. In the light of the discussions carried out in these two bodies and in the context of the restructuring of the secretariat now being undertaken by the Director-General, a Division of Cultural Policies is being established in order to ensure a holistic approach in this domain, encompassing all dimensions of the culture programme.

12. In the meantime, the secretariat has reached out in various ways to the secretariats of the United Nations and the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, in pursuance of the recommendation of the Stockholm Conference to the Director-General that he communicate the Action Plan to the heads of all the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, to other intergovernmental organizations, both international and regional, with a view to seeking the inclusion of cultural policy objectives in all their development programmes and activities. In the summer of 1998, the Action Plan was sent to the heads of all United Nations system organizations with the intention of strengthening inter-agency cooperation in the field of culture and development. Many organizations responded positively by appointing focal points and indicated their readiness to plan joint actions with UNESCO. Since many agencies are, in fact, undertaking activities informed by the cultural perspective on development issues within the framework of their own mandates, UNESCO has also created a new Web page on its culture and development site, with links to all of the Internet pages of United Nations system organizations that illustrate their programmes/projects pertinent to culture and development. The new page was launched on 30 June 2000, marking the reality of the system-wide interaction called for in the Stockholm Action Plan.

13. Finally, UNESCO, having been invited in May 2000 by the Development Policy Analysis Division of the United Nations Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to provide comments on the Secretary-General's draft of a new international development strategy for 2001-2010, in response to General Assembly resolution 54/206, the secretariat suggested the inclusion of a separate section on culture and development, in the chapter on goals, policies and implementation measures, and appropriate language for the chapter on the major objectives of the strategy. It will be recalled that the Stockholm Action Plan requested the Director-General of UNESCO to pursue the goal of obtaining the integration of a cultural perspective into the next international development strategy.